

Ron Embleton

The Tinder Box



Once Upon a Time

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ALL IN COLOUR — MAKES LEARNING A JOY

Once Upon a Time

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The Tinder Box—
See page 2 inside.



The Tinder Box



1. Once upon a time, there came a soldier marching along the high road—left, right, left, right! He had his knapsack on his back and a sword by his side, for he had been in the wars and was now returning home. And on the road he met an old witch. A rather horrid creature she was. "Good evening," cockled she.

2. "What a bright sword and what a large knapsack you have, my fine fellow. I tell you what—you shall have as much money for your own as you can wish." "Thanks, old witch," said the soldier. "But how will that happen?" "Do you see yonder large tree?" said the witch, pointing to a tree close by the wayside.



3. "It is quite hollow within," she went on. "You can easily climb down into it. As soon as you get to the bottom you will find yourself in a passage. There you will see three doors with the keys in the locks. On opening the first door you will enter a room, where a dog with eyes as big as teacups guards a chest filled with copper coins. Take as much as you please."



4. "Do not be afraid of the dog," said the witch. "I will lend you my apron. Just put him on the apron and he will do you no harm. But if you like silver coins better, go into the next room, where you will find a dog with eyes as large as mill-wheels. Do not be afraid of him. You have only to set him down on my apron and you will be able to empty the silver chest with ease."



5. The soldier took the witch's apron, then tied a rope round his waist and let himself down into the hollow tree. "Just one more thing," said the witch. "If you would rather have gold instead of silver and copper, go into the third room, where you will find a dog with eyes as large as round towers. Put him on the apron and take as much gold from the chest as you like."



7. The soldier's heart was beating fast as he went quietly down the passage. He was looking for the first door and he soon found it. "The old witch was quite right," he thought. "There is indeed a key in the lock." Very gently he turned the key, so as not to make too much noise, and opened the door. Peeping into the room, the first thing he saw was a huge bone on the floor.



6. As the soldier went farther down, the last words he heard from the witch were: "Not a penny do I want. The only thing I want you to bring me is an old under-box which my grandmother left there by mistake the last time she was down in the tree." The soldier suddenly found himself in a wide passage, just as the strange old witch had described. It was lit by several lamps.



8. Then he heard a soft growl and saw the dog with eyes as big as telescopes. It looked at the soldier, then put one of its front paws on a chest as though to protect it. "There's a good creature," the soldier said. "But don't stare at me so, or you will make your eyes weak." Hoping that the witch had spoken truthfully, he began to slip the apron out of his pocket to put the dog on it.

The Tinder Box



1. Just as the old witch had described to him when he met her on his way home from the war, the brave soldier found himself in a great cave beneath an oak tree—and in the cave was a dog with eyes as big as teacups guarding a chest full of copper coins. "I think I can deal with you, my fine fellow," said the soldier.

2. He spread the witch's apron on the ground and managed to lift the dog's front paws on to it. At once the dog became quiet, just as the witch had promised. "This is wonderful," chuckled the soldier. "Now I can help myself to all the copper coins I wish and fill my knapsack with as much as I am able to carry."



3. Having done this, the soldier picked up the apron, patted the dog on the head and went out. His knapsack was heavy, being full of copper coins but he carried it happily on one shoulder. "I have enough money here to keep me in lodging and food for at least a whole month," he said to himself, as he climbed a flight of steps.



4. He opened a door at the top that went down some more steps and, wonders of wonders, he came to a cave where sat the dog with eyes as large as mill-wheels! "You had better not stare at me so," remarked the soldier. "It will make your eyes weak." The huge dog growled but the soldier, having the witch's apron, was not afraid.



5. "Here's something for you to put your paws on, my friend," the soldier said. He put the witch's apron on the ground and when the dog put a paw on it, it became quiet and contented. "That's a fine fellow," said the soldier, tickling the tip of its leg. "Now, while you rest, I will take a look inside the chest you are guarding."



6. On raising the lid of the chest, the soldier could hardly avoid blinking his eyes, being dazzled by the sparkle which came from a hoard of silver coins. "It would be foolish for me to carry a load of copper around when I might have silver," he thought, and, emptying his knapsack of the copper coins, he filled it with silver.



7. The knapsack was still as heavy as before, but now it was much more valuable. "Just one of these silver coins will keep me for a week at least—and I must have a thousand of them," said the joyful soldier. He went out of the cave and looked around him. "The witch spoke of there being three rooms," he murmured.



8. "Before I find my way out, I suppose I had better have a glance at the third." Soon he came to the third door, which he opened. There he found himself at the top of a flight of steps, looking down into an enormous cave. Something was in the cave looking at him—a dog with eyes each as large as a round tower!

The Tinder Box



1. Now the brave soldier was in the third of the rooms under the hollow oak tree, and here he came upon the dog with eyes as big as round towers, and they kept rolling round and round like wheels. "Good evening," said the soldier, and he touched his cap in great respect, for he had never seen such a monster dog as this before. "You had better not stare at me so—I will make your eyes weak."

2. The soldier stood looking at the huge dog for a minute or two, then slipped the old witch's apron along the floor until it came to rest beneath one of the dog's paws. At once the dog stopped growling and rolling its eyes. "Thank goodness the witch spoke the truth about her apron," thought the soldier to himself, with a sigh of relief. "Without it I could never have tamed this one!"



3. Then he looked at the chest which the dog had been guarding. It was full of gold coins, enough to buy anything in the world that he wanted. Laughing, he emptied the knapsack of the silver coins and put the gold ones in instead. What a weight it was!



4. Picking up the old tinder box, he hurried along the passageways to the slope that led up to the hollow oak tree. "Hello, old witch," he shouted. "Pull me up again!" "Have you brought the tinder box with you, soldier?" He told her that he had indeed.



5. But once he got to ground level again, the soldier would not give it to her. "Just tell me," he said, "what you are going to do with this old tinder box." "That's no concern of yours," replied the old witch. "You've got your money, so give me that tinder box this instant." The soldier started to draw his sword. "If you won't tell me then you shan't have it," he exclaimed.



6. The witch screamed and raged, but there was nothing she was able to do about it. Away went the soldier with the tinder box and his knapsack crammed with gold coins and presently he came within sight of a large town. A very handsome town it was, too. "It looks a likely place for me to spend a little of my money," he chuckled. "I'll be able to eat and sleep like a millionaire."



7. Left, right? Left, right? He marched proudly up to the front entrance of the finest inn in the town. Two of the servants saw him coming and could not help thinking that the soldier might be making a mistake and could not really afford to enter such a place like a grand gentleman. But when he brought out one of the gold coins, they bowed and welcomed him inside without delay.



8. In walked the soldier and he called for two of the best rooms in the place. Satisfied with these, he then went down into the dining-room and ordered the choicest and the most expensive dishes for his supper. A king could not have been treated better. Our soldier was now a very rich man—but that was not to be the end of his adventures with the tinder box.

The Tinder Box



1. Now that he had so much money to spend, the soldier did not worry how quickly it went. He rented himself a fine place to live in and had servants to dress him in the most splendid clothes. They told him about their King and the beautiful Princess, his daughter. "I would like to see her," the soldier said. "Please make all the arrangements." "No one can see her at all," the footman replied.



2. "She lives in a copper palace and no one but the King goes to visit her, because it has been foretold that she will marry a common soldier, and our King would not like that at all," added the footman. So the soldier had to be content with travelling around in his carriage, and he always took plenty of money with him to give away to the needy, for he had once been poor himself!



3. But as he was now giving and spending every day and receiving no money in return, his money began to disappear. At last the knapsack was empty except for a coin or two. "How quickly it has gone," gasped the soldier in some surprise. "Now I am poor once again and will have to move from this expensive apartment."



4. So he moved to a cheap little attic, where he had to look after himself without any servants or friends. One evening he did not even have a match to light a candle, but he remembered all at once the tinder-box that the old witch had made him fetch out of the hollow tree. He struck it once to make some sparks.



5. Wonder of wonders! The door burst open and in came the dog with eyes as big as tea-cups. "I have brought you a bag of copper coins," said the dog. "What other commands has my master for his slave?" The soldier now understood the magic of the under-box. "If I strike it once, the dog with eyes like tea-cups brings me a bagful of money!" he chuckled to himself.



6. "To strike it twice will bring the dog that guards the chest of silver," he went on. "And three strikes will bring the dog that guards the gold." Then another thought came to him. "I want to see the Princess," he told the dog with eyes as big as tea-cups. "It is rather late, I know, but bring her here." The dog bounded away and the soldier waited patiently.



7. He did not have long to wait, for in less than two or three minutes the dog came bounding back. And on its back, sleeping soundly, lay the beautiful Princess. "How enchanting and lovely she is," said the soldier. "She is a real Princess indeed and I am glad to have the great good fortune of looking at her."

8. The soldier could not stop himself from bending down and kissing the hand of the sweet Princess. She did not move, but the soldier thought that there was a tiny tremble of her little finger. "Dear sweet Princess, I would like you to stay longer but now I must send you back to your copper castle," he said.

The Tinder Box



1. On the morning after the dog with eyes as big as tencups had carried the Princess to the soldier's house for a few moments, breakfast was served to the King and Queen and their lovely daughter in the copper castle. "Last night I had such an odd dream," the Princess said. "I dreamt that I was riding on the back of a huge dog and a soldier leapt down and kissed my hand."

2. "A pretty sort of dream indeed!" exclaimed the Queen, and that night she told one of the maids to keep watch in the bedroom of the Princess. Now, the soldier longed to see the fair Princess again and summoned the dog to fetch her. This the dog did and the maid was astonished to see the enormous animal come into the bedroom of the Princess and put her gently on its back.



3. The dog hurried away with the sleeping Princess, taking her out of the copper castle and through the woodlands that led to the town. Whereupon the maid put on a cloak and followed at a safe distance, to find out where it was taking the Princess.

4. She saw the dog vanish into a large house. "Now I know what to do," she thought to herself. "I will make sure that this house is well remembered." Taking out a piece of chalk, she then put a large white cross on the door and went back to the palace.



5. By the time the maid got there the Princess was safely back in her room, for the soldier had not dared to keep her longer than the time it took him to kiss her hand again. But when the maid told the King and Queen about it, the King called one of the Royal Guards. "Get two men ready to go with myself and the Queen on a journey to the town," the King commanded him.

6. Now on the way back to the cave beneath the hollow oak tree where it lived, the dog with eyes as big as teacups happened to go back through the town and it saw that the door of the soldier's house now had a white cross on it. And, being a dog of great intelligence, it at once found another piece of chalk and put a cross on every door of every house in the neighborhood.



7. Early in the morning out came the King, the Queen, the maid and three of the Royal Guards, every one of them very curious to see where the Princess had been. "Here is the place," said the King, as soon as he saw a door with a white cross on it.

8. "My dear, where are your eyes? This is the place," said the Queen, seeing a second door marked with chalk. Then they saw crosses on the doors everywhere—and it was evident that their search would be in vain and they would have to give it up.

The Tinder Box



1. Once again, the dog with eyes as big as telescopes took the Princess on its back and ran away with her to the house where the soldier lived. But this time, the Queen had been clever enough to attach a little bag, filled with finest flour to the Princess's waist. A hole cut in the bag let the flour out in a trickle and it went drip-drip all the way from the palace.



2. The King's guards could easily follow the white trail and they went into the house and arrested the soldier. "Come with us, fellow," said the captain of the guard. "You will be most severely punished for this, I promise you." "But I did the Princess no harm," said the soldier. "I only wanted to see her face and kiss her hand, for I have fallen in love with her."



3. By order of the King, the poor soldier was imprisoned in a dungeon. There seemed to be no way of escape and in the next hour they were going to execute him. But he managed to attract the attention of a small boy through the barred window. "Run to my lodgings and fetch me my tinder-box, lad, and I will give you two pence," said the soldier. "All right," said the boy.



4. As the lad raced away for the tinder-box, the guards came and took the soldier out to his place of execution. But he was in no hurry to die, and he begged a favour from the King. "All I wish is to smoke one last pipe of tobacco, Your Majesty," he pleaded. The King could not refuse this harmless request, so the soldier filled his pipe and took the tinder-box from the boy.



5. Pretending that he wanted to light his pipe, the soldier struck the flint. Once he struck it, twice he struck it, and three times he struck it. Lo and behold, all the three wizard dogs obeyed the command and appeared at once—the dog with eyes like teacups, the dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels and the biggest of them all, which had eyes as big as round towers!

6. "Help me, my friends," the soldier cried. The three terrible dogs growled a little—but that was about all they had to do, for the mere sight of them sent the King and all his judges and soldiers into a great panic. They all ran away from the soldier, who smiled as he watched them scatter in confusion. The dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels fixed its gaze upon the King.



7. It picked up the King's cloak in its teeth and swung the royal monarch off the ground. He wriggled and squirmed and yelled to be put down. "I will see that it is done at once, Your Majesty," snarled the soldier. "But I will only give the order on one condition—that you will allow me to marry your daughter."



8. And when the King agreed, the soldier called off the three great dogs and sent them back to their home beneath the hollow tree. In that royal kingdom, a wise man had once foretold that the lovely Princess would marry a soldier—and this soon became true, and the happy soldier had no need to use his flint-box again.